

1862--Emancipation Day--1884

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The Negro as a Political Problem  
Oration by the  
Hon. George W. Williams



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# The Negro as a Political Problem.

## ORATION

BY THE

HON. GEORGE W. WILLIAMS,

OF MASSACHUSETTS,

AT THE

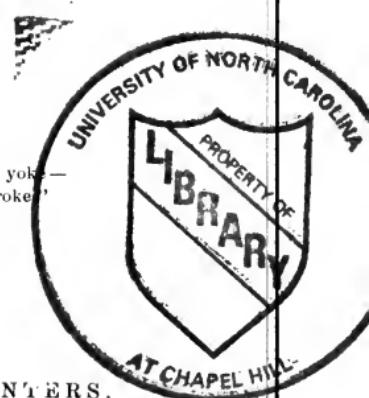
ASBURY CHURCH, WASHINGTON, D. C.,

April 16, 1884.

"From every hill instinct with life is sent  
Gratitude — a mental sacrament,  
That from their neck they loosen'd felt the yoke —  
That the first link in slavery's chain was broke."

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1884.





## ORATION.

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### THE NEGRO AS A POLITICAL PROBLEM.

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*Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

From the waters of the Potomac to the liberty-crowned dome of the Capitol of the nation the bells of liberty have been ringing. The prayer of gratitude has been said, and the dirge has been sung at the tomb of slavery. The stirring strains of martial music, the swinging battalions of troops, the citizens in holiday attire, the bright faces and glad voices of the day, proclaim this an occasion of more than ordinary interest. And now, at the close of this anniversary day, while the pride, pomp, and circumstance of the occasion pass to their place in history, let us turn to the muse of meditation. Under this sacred shelter, whose platform has been the fortress of every honest and humane interest, we may find all the conditions friendly to reflection and instruction. Experience holds in lifted hand the flaming torch of knowledge, while our hearts know full well the serious lessons this day would teach us. There are but two rational reasons for going back into the past: one is where we can gather the fadeless flowers

of memory whose aroma may yet cheer the present ; the other is where the bitter herbs of experience may act as a tonic upon a debilitated moral effort amid the living issues of the present.

Few, indeed, and odorless and colorless, are the flowers of memory that we as a race care to turn back and pluck. Passion flowers innumerable we might find. But were we to turn and touch them, every stamen and petal would instantly become vocal with a thousand tongues. They would tell the story of tribes cheated, villages burned, and murder perpetrated by the remorseless hand of gain. They would relate the story of the middle passage, of young men and innocent maidens, of old men and helpless women, forced into the horrible middle passage ; how that the ocean became a voracious sepulchre for hundreds of thousands of the hapless victims of the slave-trade, and will forever chant a ceaseless requiem over their watery grave ; they would voice the deep plaint of innocent womanhood led into captivity, of broken hearts and sundered families ; they would tell the long and mournful story of a race's wrongs and sufferings, — of hope and piety, love and fear ; we should hear how the race was mobbed in the North and sold at the South ; how malice and vengeance, lash, knife, gun, dungeon, fire, water, and insanity, performed their hateful work. God forbid that we should undertake so dreadful a task ! For were we thus to review the past we would find little else save a cemetery. And as we walked abroad we should find naught but graves of buried rights, hopes,

and loves ; of manly aspirations foully murdered, and pious protests cruelly strangled. Over such terrible things we must let the pall drop. We must turn only to those facts of history that may act as a tonic and inspiration for the discharge of duties present and future.

#### SLAVERY IN THIS DISTRICT

was always an anomaly. The District was ceded to the United States government by Maryland and Virginia; but the portion belonging to Virginia was subsequently ceded back to that State. Thus the District was ceded entirely by Maryland. This was consummated in 1790, and comprised sixty-four square miles. In 1634 the Colony of Maryland was formed out of a portion of the territory belonging to Virginia. And Maryland, as the other Southern Colonies, held slaves until the war for the Union destroyed the institution. When Congress appointed a committee to secure a permanent seat for the government, instructions were also given to provide a place where it should have authority also. This was done; and in December, 1800, the Congress of the United States moved into the District.

In the articles of concession, the people then living in the District of Columbia did not reserve any vested rights. They had no indefeasible possessory right to slave property. There was nothing in the Constitution justifying the existence of the evil at the very seat of the American government. So, then, the crime was permitted for more than sixty years.

The following table exhibits the number of free and bond persons of color in the District for the space of six decades:—

Year.	Free Negroes.	Slave Negroes.
1800	490	3,244
1810	1,527	5,395
1820	2,758	6,377
1830	4,604	6,119
1840	6,499	4,694
1850	10,059	3,687
1860	11,131	3,181

In 1870 there were 43,404 Negroes in the District; and in 1880, 59,596.

That it was clearly within the power of Congress to abolish it no clear-headed statesman ever doubted. It was tolerated in the States because the people had the right to support it by State Constitution, or abolish it by amendment. But all government territory was under the immediate and absolute control of Congress. If it were claimed by Northern apologists that the Union could not have been formed except slavery were allowed in the Southern States, there was certainly no good excuse for tolerating the crime in the District of Columbia. And yet for more than two generations slavery built its altars under the aegis of the American Capitol; the slave-hound bayed his human victims, and the black shadow of the accursed institution sent a chill of death through thousands of hearts.

In 1800, as we have shown, there were 3,244 slaves in the District of Columbia. Ten years later the slave population had increased to 5,395, in 1820 it was 6,377, in 1830 it was 6,119, in 1840 it was 4,694, in 1850 it was 3,687, and in 1860 there were only 3,186. By these figures we see that at the end of six decades there were less slaves in the District than there were at the beginning of the century. The largest number was in 1820, 6,377. This was the year in which the Missouri Compromise occasioned so much excitement. From that year down to the breaking out of the Rebellion, the slave population was on a steady decrease. Slavery, existing within the District without sanction of law, attracted the attention of anti-slavery men from the beginning. In 1827 William Lloyd Garrison began his career as an anti-slavery agitator by addressing a petition to Congress for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. The friends of freedom saw the glaring inconsistency of allowing the slave-trade to go on at the capital of a free republic, and thus they felt it to be a patriotic duty to labor for the abolition of the evil in the District. But the influence of the South was overwhelming. Avarice and cotton were more than a match for humanity, and the clank of the slaves' chains was heard in your streets. Justice tarried; the nation halted at its plain, constitutional duty, and failed to use its authority. The years flew apace, until at last even-handed justice lifted the bitter chalice of war to the nation's lips.

The shock of embattled arms, that had been the na-

tion's lullaby, was heard in dreadful reverberations throughout the land. A year of an unbroken series of Union disasters humbled the national pride. While the nation was struggling and gasping for life, while all the powers of Congress were invoked to tear, one by one, the steel fingers of armed rebellion from the nation's throat, in the slave marts of the capital bonds-men, with brows beaded with the sweat of unrequited toil, lifted their pinioned hands to yon goddess of liberty in vain. The heart of the nation was as hard as the brazen images on the Capitol that had witnessed for years that the Constitution of this great Republic was a tissue of lies. The national treasury was depleted; the bonds were depreciated; the commerce that had whitened all seas had largely disappeared; the work-shops were deserted; treason lurked in the high places; the rebel forces were closing in upon the capital, and the red fields of inglorious conflict admonished the Congress to wipe the foul stain of slavery from the District of Columbia.

#### THE MORAL EFFECT

of emancipation in the District of Columbia was marked. Anti-slavery men regarded this as the entering wedge. It was the thermometer of Congressional patriotism; it was the glorious reward of patient and consistent labor; it was the answer to agonizing prayers, — a prophecy of victory, long delayed, for the cause of the Union. It became the theme of the pulpit, the topic of editorial

discussion, the inspiration of our army, the bright star of a nation's hope, suddenly breaking into a long night of distress and perplexity.

From field and mountain, from cabin and cot, from hamlet and village, the long, dark stream of eager freedmen poured into the capital of the Republic. In the more evil days they shrank from the name of Washington as from some deadly reptile. Washington was the place where legal chains were forged for their unwilling limbs. Under the goddess of liberty laws had been enacted that charged every power of the government to hunt down, at all hazards, and regardless of cost, the fugitive flying for life, and hurry him back to the hell of slavery. Under the dome of that Capitol a Chief Justice had declared that "a Negro had no rights that a white is bound to respect." No Negro had been allowed to walk under the shadow of the Capitol or darken its door, except as nurse or servant to some Southern slaveholder.

Horrible indeed were the thoughts of Washington to the poor slaves beyond its borders. But the news of emancipation had come to them in their dark Isle of Patmos, and was heard above the mad storm of civil war. Washington was transformed from a prison to a castle. To the poor fugitive and bondman it seemed now to be the only secure place in all the land. It stood as a lone island in the midst of an angry sea, and every wave of rebellion seemed anxious to devour it. But there it stood, amid the boom of cannon, the glare of the lightnings of war, safe even amidst the

machinations and plottings of treason. And here the curious Negro found rest and security. Under the ample folds of "the stars and stripes," the poetry of all loyal hearts, thousands of homeless, nameless, and penniless freedmen went and came through these streets without let or hindrance.

#### EDUCATED NEGROES

came into Washington also. They felt some security now, and were willing to serve the race and nation as opportunity offered; and history should not fail to record the fact that such Colored men as Douglass, Langston, Walls, Cook, Vashon, Garnet, Downing, and others exerted a good influence over the President and the Congress in the interest of the race. The Freedmen's Bureau, Bank, and barracks, the founding of night schools and hospitals, were brought about and managed not without the aid of intelligent and patriotic men of the Negro race. Industrious, sober, and educated leaders of the race in the District have wrought mightily for good; and since the close of the war Washington has contained a larger number of educated men and women of the Negro race than any other city in the United States, according to its population. The District of Columbia is the home of Frederick Douglass, and he will always remain the great historic NEGRO. Hon. John Mercer Langston, United States Minister to Hayti, Wm. E. Matthews, the broker, Capt. O. B. S. Walls, are among the foremost men of Washington;

and the professions contain noble representatives of the race. Howard University and Wayland Seminary, Sumner High School and the seventy-five public schools for Colored pupils alone, are equal to the educational work to be accomplished in the District.

#### THE OFFICE-HOLDERS

in Washington are not all white persons; there are six hundred and twenty persons of color in the departments. The collector of taxes, the register of deeds, and the register of the United States treasury are able men of the Negro race. But, notwithstanding this showing, we must see through the lenses of experience that office-seeking or office-holding is not a healthy employment for young men. It is true that there must be trained men for these positions of government trust and emolument, but there are always more horses than stalls. The evil is in making a government position a profession. This idea once espoused, a young man is unfitted for any other position in civil life. When an office-holder has saved some money — but few ever do — he should resign, and go into some business for which he is especially fitted. We know that few officials die, and none resign. But two resignations gave the Negro race a successful broker and an historian. Let others follow these examples.

## SUFFRAGE IN THE DISTRICT

would do much good to all classes of people. It was tried once, but purblind prejudice sought its destruction before the results were reached.

Nevertheless, Alexander Shepard sowed wisely, and to-day all of the people of the District are enjoying the fruit of his wise labors. If suffrage for the people of this District is objected to because it would grant a power to a large number of ignorant people, we would say that such an objection but begs the question. To advance such an objection is to confess universal manhood suffrage a failure. And, furthermore, if suffrage is *withheld* on account of ignorance in the District of Columbia, it should be *withdrawn* in New York City for the same reason. Ignorance in the majority cannot dominate an intelligent and patriotic minority: one of the latter can chase a thousand of the former, and two can put ten thousand to flight. With a competent man as governor of the territory, with a careful House of Delegates and a Council, reforms could be inaugurated, abuses corrected, and such public improvements made as to make Washington the best regulated and most beautiful city in all the wide world.

## RACE PREJUDICE

should be driven from Washington, suffrage or no suffrage. It is a national disgrace that nearly every hotel in Washington closes its doors against the Negro. He

comes, if he come at all, amply prepared to pay his way; and the fact that he goes to a first-class hotel should be regarded as *prima facie* evidence of decent personal appearance, good manners, and good sense. Circumstances govern these cases, or ought to. Hotel proprietors are more to be blamed than the public. They are in a position to educate the travelling public; and, to cater to this absolute and wicked prejudice, is to retard the moral growth and intellectual expansion of the public. Hotels are licensed and protected by law. The law-makers are the servants of the people. They intend, in serving and representing the people, that public inns shall provide for the wants of travellers without regard to race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

A prejudice so pronounced and hurtful should be abolished here at the capital of the nation. In this good work Colored men themselves can accomplish a great deal. Visitors to the capital of the nation are very observing. They form their judgments from what they see. And whom do they see first, last, and all the time they are here? The idle, shiftless, unkempt Negroes who lounge at the corners of the streets, doze on the City Hall steps, and whose deportment and idle colloquy make every decent person blush for very shame. Every clergyman in the District ought to make it a part of his ministry to teach these poor people the use of water and soap, of comb and brush. Cleanliness is next to godliness. And the most distressing part of this public exhibition of rags, ignorance, and idleness is,

our respectable, industrious citizens are not seen. Here, then, a great injustice is done to all the Colored citizens of the District. Let us remove the beam from our own eye, then we shall see clearly the mote in the eye of a prejudiced and misguided public.

#### THE NEGRO PROBLEM

is older than our government. Not that the Negro has thrust himself upon the attention of the world, but the world has been interested in him for various and conflicting reasons. Strangely enough, the Negro has appeared at the central points in the history of the world. Simon, of Cyrene, appeared in time to bear the cross of the Saviour to Calvary.

In North Africa, in the second century of the Christian era, the Negro bore the brunt of Saracen persecution, and clung to the Christian faith. In fact Africa was the battle-ground upon which the organic life of the Christian church was tested; and from that point of history and victory it went forth to civilize Northern Europe.

The trend of the great forces of the world's best civilization, arms, commerce, letters, religion, and science has been around Africa. Touched but gently on the outer edge, the heart of the great continent is yet a stranger to the noblest impulses of the world's best life. For the most part only the defiling hand of slavery has been lain upon her. For nearly five centuries the slave-trade, domestic and foreign, shut out the light of knowledge as storm-clouds veil the brightness of the sun. In 1562 Sir John Hawkins, Sir Lionel Duchet,

Sir Thomas Lodge, and Sir William Winter laid the foundation of the slave-trade during the reign of Elizabeth. At first the queen expressed herself as horrified; but later on encouraged the most pestiferous crime that ever cursed the seas. In 1702 her "most gracious Majesty," Queen Anne, in her elaborate instructions to the royal governors of the British Colonies in North America, urged that the people "take especial care that God Almighty be devoutly and duly served," and that the "Royal African Company, of England," "take especial care that the said Province may have a constant and sufficient supply of merchantable Negroes at moderate rates." "The British Board of Trade" never lost sight of the slave-trade; while Parliament never thought the question of trafficking in human beings beneath its notice.

#### SLAVERY IN THE COLONIES

was as early as anything connected with them. Along-side of the church and schoolhouse the colonists built the slave-pen. And with their prayers for religious and political liberty they supplicated both the earthly and heavenly throne for "merchantable Negroes." The evil grew, as evils do, until it was no less a serious question than the *Stamp Act* or the *writs of assistance*.

#### THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

demonstrated how difficult a problem the Negro was. On the 24th of October, 1774, the Continental Congress

passed the NON-IMPORTATION COVENANT. All the delegates from the twelve Colonies signed this covenant, that "We will neither import nor purchase any slave imported after the first day of December next ; after which time we will wholly discontinue the slave-trade, and will neither be concerned in it ourselves, nor will we hire our vessels, nor sell our commodities or manufactures to those who are concerned in it." This magnificent article, one of the two passed by the Congress then in session at Philadelphia, gives us a fair idea of the magnitude of the Negro problem. And it shows also, in the light of subsequent history, how false governments can be to themselves and how cruel to their subjects.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

was chairman of a meeting held at Fairfax Court House, Va., on the 18th of July, 1774, to protest against the slave-trade. Twenty-four resolutions were presented and unanimously adopted; three of the resolutions were directly against the slave-trade.

"17. *Resolved*, That it is the opinion of this meeting, that, during our present difficulties and distress, no slaves ought to be imported into any of the British Colonies on this continent; and we take this opportunity of declaring our most earnest wishes to see an entire stop forever put to such a wicked, cruel, and unnatural trade."

Coming from Virginia, the mother of slavery before she was the mother of Presidents, meant a great deal;

but the feeling of concern about the slave-trade was not confined to any one Colony; all of them took action of some kind, and the interest was deep and genuine. The Colonies heard the low reverberations of the thunders of war; the clouds were gathering; they wanted to get into line with the anti-slavery sentiment of the provinces, to be in harmony with the increasing humanity of Europe, to break the favorite hobby of the Crown, and to secure the sympathy of the slave population at home.

On the 29th of May, 1775, the *Committee of Safety* for the Province of Massachusetts discussed the question of the military employment of Negroes. The question again made its appearance in the deliberations of this committee on the 6th of June, and once more on the 10th of July. On the 29th of September, 1775, the Negro question was warmly discussed in the Continental Congress, and on the 8th of October it entered the military conference at Cambridge. On the 18th and 23d of October, 1775, it was discussed, and on the 12th of November, 1775, Gen. George Washington made it the subject of a general order. On the 30th of December, Gen. Washington again made it the subject of another general order, and on the next day, 31st December, wrote the President of the Continental Congress; and on the 16th of January, 1776, Negroes were admitted to serve as soldiers in the Continental Army.

#### THE MINISTERIAL ARMY

craved the services of the Negro, and its leaders were not idle. On the 16th of November, 1775, Lord Dun-

more issued a proclamation, offering protection, freedom, the British uniform, and bounty to all Negroes who should join his standards; and for a time this proclamation had a disastrous effect upon the Negroes of Virginia in particular, and upon those of other Colonies in general. The struggle to secure the valuable services of the Negro went on until after the proclamation of Sir Henry Clinton, June 30, 1799. This proclamation appeared again in the *Royal Gazette* of New York, on the 3d of July, but the Negro had cast his lot with the colonial army. He heard the warning shots at Lexington, and the victorious guns of Rochambeau, Lafayette, and Washington at Yorktown; and when the war was over he heard the order of Washington read to the victorious troops that the British General, Sir Guy Carleton, in evacuating New York, was "not to carry away *Negroes* and other property."

#### THE CONSTITUTION

could not be made without a long, bitter discussion on the Negro question. This question overshadowed all others. It puzzled, perplexed, and annoyed the convention of distinguished gentlemen who had met to make a Constitution for the new government, born of the struggle between despotism and liberty. There were generals and statesmen, orators and authors, philanthropists and lawyers; there were soldiers, with the halo of battle still upon their brows, fresh from victorious fields, where they had witnessed the valor, efficiency, and

humanity of Negro troops. The famous declaration of Jefferson, "that all men were created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," had become the shibboleth of all true Americans. Every memory and incident of the glorious Revolutionary struggle, every garland of victory, every impulse of humanity, the dictum of reason, the groans and tears of the slaves, and the voice of conscience cried aloud for consistency and justice. But the South wanted unpaid slaves, and the North wanted free ships. Slaves and ships were the paramount question.

The Southern delegates shrewdly sought to restrict all navigation laws to a two-thirds vote, and by relieving the Southern States from duties on exports, and upon the importation of slaves, New England had to take what she could get. By denying Congress the authority of giving preference to American over foreign shipping, it was designed to secure cheap transportation for Southern exports; but, as the shipping was largely owned in the Eastern States, their delegates were zealous in their efforts to prevent any restriction of the power of Congress to enact navigation laws. The prohibition of duties on the importation of slaves was demanded by the delegates from South Carolina and Georgia. They assured the convention that without such a provision they could never give their assent to the Constitution. The Northern delegates gave their support to the restriction, and the Negro became a fixed quality in this great political equation.

## WITH SLAVERY CONCEDED

to the Southern States, maintainable by constitutional authority, an element in the basal condition of Congressional representation, there was no way out of this conspiracy against human liberty. *Ichabod*, the glory had departed from the Constitution. It had conceived sin and was to bring forth death. What would be the logic of this constitutional position? Legislation in harmony with constitutional recognition of slavery. On the 6th of April, 1789, the first day of the first session of the first Congress under the present Constitution, the Negro question made its appearance in the tariff bill presented by Mr. Parker, of Virginia. In every session of Congress, until the year 1800, the Negro question appeared in one form or another. It could not be said to have subsided for any considerable time.

*Pained by the past, expecting ills to come,  
In some dread moment by the fates assign'd,*

the Congress knew not the hour or character in which the insoluble question might come.

## THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

opened with an earnest struggle for the extinction of the slave-trade to the coast of Guinea. On the 2d of January, 1800, a committee of intelligent citizens of color, from Philadelphia, presented a petition to Congress protesting against the continuance of the slave-

trade on the seas. It was presented by the member from the county of Philadelphia, and provoked immediate and sharp discussion. The tone and manner of the Southern members clearly indicated that they were committed to the policy of non-interference with slavery on the part of the Northern members.

On the 2d of April, 1802, Georgia ceded the territory lying west of her present limits, now embracing the States of Alabama and Mississippi. By the ordinance of 1787, passed on the 13th of July that same year, slavery was excluded from the western territory. In the Georgia articles of concession, slavery was allowed; and the demand of Georgia for the spread of the evil was acceded to. When the Territory of Indiana desired to be formed into a State and admitted into the Union, an attempt was made to repeal the ordinance of 1787. Accordingly, on the 2d of March, 1803, the select committee, to whom the prayer of the inhabitants of Indiana Territory had been referred, took the matter under consideration. It dragged its lazy lengths through the entire session of this Congress, and slept only during the recess. On the 17th of February, 1804, it was again under discussion. The committee reported that the sixth article of the ordinance of 1787, excluding slavery from the western territory, should "be suspended in a qualified manner for ten years." The Congress did not reach the matter, but the friends of slavery did not lose sight of it. So again, in the Congress of 1805-6, another attempt was made in the interest of the measure. On the 14th of February,

1806, the committee having the memorial in charge made a favorable report. The report was made the special order for a day certain, but was crowded out by other business. Nothing daunted, Gen. Harrison, governor of the Indiana Territory, with resolves from his territorial legislature, addressed a letter urging a suspension of the ordinance of 1787. On the 21st of January, 1807, his letter, with enclosures, was received, and sent to a special committee. On the 12th of February, 1807, the committee made a favorable report. Again the matter was made the special order, but was never called up. Two other attempts were made, when the matter subsided.

#### THE SLAVE POPULATION

increased thirty-three per cent during these years of excitement, and slavery as an institution was sending its dark death-roots into the organic life of the nation. In 1817, Dec. 10, Mississippi applied for admission into the Union. The trial of slaves by grand juries was dispensed with, and the regulations for the system were exacting and cruel.

#### OUR NAVY

policed the seaboard for several years to prevent the slave-trade from foreign parts. Congress had attempted to make the old fugitive slave law more efficient by amendment. In the session of 1817-18, it passed the House by a vote of eighty-four to sixty-nine. Amended in the Senate, it passed by a vote of seventeen

to thirteen, but was tabled in the House. Anti-slavery sentiment began to take shape, and many stammering tongues were cut loose. Men who had only thought, now began to speak and act. But the activity and zeal were not all on one side.

In the month of March, 1818, the delegate from Missouri presented a petition from the people praying to be admitted into the Union as a State. It went to the appropriate committee, where it remained till the next session. Then followed a fierce and prolonged struggle. The admission of Missouri with a slave Constitution, after denying the prayer of Indiana, was a bold move. But the violation of the sacred ordinance of 1787, that aimed to preserve the western territory from the defiling touch of slavery, was nothing less than a gigantic political crime.

#### RESTRICTION OR EXTENSION

of slavery was now the battle-cry. Missouri was the storm-line; and the political sky was filled with portentous clouds. The struggle between the friends and enemies of slavery was long and bitter; but the end came at last, and Mr. Clay's famous compromise was adopted. The Missouri Legislature made a solemn agreement not to pass any act "by which any other citizens of either of the States should be excluded from the enjoyment of the privileges and immunities to which they were entitled under the Constitution of the United States." Thus on the 27th of February, 1821, Missouri was admitted into the Union.

## ANTI-SLAVERY SENTIMENT

began to be felt; local societies were forming throughout the Northern States, and anti-slavery became a topic of discussion in colleges and lyceums. All this work was a preparation for a grand organization. The lonely voice of Benjamin Lundy had already been heard as one crying in the wilderness. He had organized the press and platform for the cause of the slave; had enlisted woman in the work, and had put his worldly fortune upon the altar of the righteous cause.

In the fulness of time came William Lloyd Garrison. From obscurity, poverty, down from the wind-swept and snow-capped mountains of Vermont, he came into the great moral conflict. He threw down the gage of battle at the feet of the haughty Goliath of slavery. He organized a party; he founded a great journal; he converted the conservatism of New England; he attacked the Constitution and the pulpit, and brought not "peace, but a sword." His clarion call to battle startled the slave power from its security ; and by his iron will, steady purpose, and unflagging zeal aroused the country as no one man had ever done before.

## DIVERSIFIED METHODS

there were, but all of them aimed at the common enemy, led to the same end. Anti-slavery societies multiplied. The *Garrisonian*, *Heterodox*, *Political Abolition*, *Economic*, *Aggressive*, *Colonization*, *Under-ground* and

*Free Soil* parties enlisted in the cause of the slave. The slave power was correspondingly industrious. Southern legislatures enacted severer laws, and subjected their victims to a most rigorous state of bondage. Suspicion fell with merciless fury upon every Northern person who went into the slave States. An embargo was laid against Northern anti-slavery publications of every description; and Southern executive and legislative dignity was not lowered by offering rewards for anti-slavery books and heads. Books were written from both points of view; the pew became as deeply concerned as the 'change, and the pulpit began to imitate the platform.

#### THE DRED SCOTT DECISION

added more fuel to the flame. Then the Burns rescue case, the struggle in Kansas, and last, but more than all else, the bold stroke of grand old John Brown at Harper's Ferry carried the Negroes' case on appeal from the court of reason to the court of war.

#### THE SLAVERY REBELLION

was begun by the South at Charleston, and ended by the North at Appomattox. You know the story of the Negroes' wrongs and trials in that memorable struggle. I need not tell you how he was first counted on the outside, hunted down by Union troops, clubbed, shot, and burned in the North; first given a spade, then intrusted with a musket. He had to conquer the prejudice of the Union army; and then, upon \$7.00 a month, —

half pay,—defeat the skilled soldiery of the Southern Confederacy. He did this, and more; and history, not grudgingly but cheerfully, records, “*The Colored Troops fought nobly.*”

#### RECONSTRUCTION

followed the destruction wrought by the great military struggle. Homeless and nameless, penniless and friendless, four million freedmen stood alone under the open sky. No Egyptians were there from whom to borrow finger-rings and jewelry; no sandals, no staff in hand, no wise leadership, no pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. There they stood; and their faith in God and the government of the United States flickered through the dark mists of uncertainty; and they did not faint. Upon this inexperienced people grave responsibilities were placed; and, taking all their disadvantages under consideration, they did better than might have been expected. We will not subject their work to a critical test, but after twenty-two years of freedom let us recount the progress they have made.

There were 271,421 Negroes in the United States army during the war for the Union, and they participated in 249 battles. In the Freedmen’s Savings Bank and in other banks, from 1866 to 1873, the Negroes of the country deposited \$3,000,000. There have been seven lieutenant-governors, four secretaries of state, three State auditors, two State treasurers, two United States senators, fifteen members of the United States House of Representatives, one register of the United States

treasury, and one collector of taxes, one United States marshal, one recorder of deeds in the District of Columbia; nine Negroes have served in the diplomatic service, and there are at present 620 in the departments at Washington. There are 14,889 schools for Negroes, with 720,853 pupils in them. This was the result in 1880, and now, in 1884, we may safely add a quarter of a million more pupils. There are also 188 Colored students in the junior and senior classes of colleges in the Northern States, and thousands of Colored children in the common schools of the North.

#### THE CIVIL RIGHTS

of the Colored people have been overthrown by a recent decision of the United States Supreme Court, followed by a disastrous moral effect at the South. The Civil Rights Bill was the crowning act in the life of our devoted friend, the late Charles Sumner. It was the offspring of a rare scholarship, broad statesmanship, and peerless philanthropy. The bill was subjected to the severest scrutiny and criticism by its friends and enemies; and, after passing through the fires of debate, it became the law of the land. After remaining in force for nearly a decade, the United States Supreme Court was called to pass upon its constitutionality. The Court, with but one noble exception,—Justice Harlan,—decided that the bill was unconstitutional. In the Dred Scott case, Judge Taney gave the decision of the Court, Justice McLean dissenting, upon the question of the citizenship of a Negro under the Con-

stitution. He admitted that the words *negro*, *slave*, and *colored person* did not appear in the Constitution ; but maintained that it was the duty of the Court to consider the intention of the framers of the Constitution ; that the word *person* was intended to be construed as meaning slave, and, that, therefore, Dred Scott being a Negro, was not a citizen, but a slave. If Judge Taney, as Chief Justice, under a Democratic administration, could interpret the Constitution liberally in the interest of slavery, it ought not to have been a difficult matter for Judge Waite, Chief Justice under a Republican administration, to interpret the Constitution liberally in the interest of freedom. We had fought four years and one half to destroy slavery ; we had made 500,000 graves ; we had maimed 300,000 men ; we had expended \$3,000,000,000 ; we had emancipated 4,500,000 human beings. In the light of these facts it was clear to be seen that civil rights were but the incidents of freedom, and followed as naturally as heat does light or the rising of the sun. A liberal interpretation of this law would have been in line and in harmony with the great civilization of the nineteenth century. Not only the Supreme Court, but political parties have turned to abstractions rather than to the great questions of humanity. Materialism reigns everywhere.

#### THE NEGROES' PAST

political action was the irresistible logic of gratitude. He entered the ranks of his political friends. He voted

as he had fought, for the Union. Any other political action would have earned the execrations of God and man. Moreover, the Negro's ballot was as indispensable to the successful work of reconstruction as the Negro's bullet was to the successful prosecution of the war. The ex-rebels were sullen and intractable during the entire period of reconstruction. Some of them went off to Mexico, Brazil, England, and Egypt; others remained in a state of inertia ; while a very small minority accepted the situation like men, and put their energies into the work of reconstruction. The *carpet-bagger*, *scallawag*, and *Negro* had control of the Southern States. These were not the most desirable forces to effect so great a work; but they were to be preferred to traitors. The failure of reconstruction must be charged to Congress, and to the educated native white men of the South. Congress could have enacted wiser laws, and the white men of the South could have secured better government there, by methods of prudence and humanity.

#### THE POLITICAL FIDELITY

of the Negro is the marvel of all political history. He stood by his friends through evil and through good report. And when the white Republicans had been reduced to a mere corporal's guard, the Negro remained loyal to his party. In fact he was more faithful than his friends. For his fidelity he was rewarded by being deserted by his friends and by being shot by his enemies. Thousands upon thousands of brave black Republicans

were murdered for political opinion's sake; and political suffrage in the South has had a name to live, but is dead.

GEN. GRANT

owed his election in 1868 and in 1872 to the patriotic fidelity of the Negro voters of the South. And when the destiny of the Republican party and nation was in the hands of the Negro members of the *returning boards* of Mississippi, Louisiana, and Florida, in 1876, it was secure beyond all temptation. Rather than betray their friends those Negroes chose to go to prison on bread and water. Several fortunes were at their disposal if they would only consent to alter the returns, but they indignantly declined the bribe. They could neither be bought nor bullied. They were good men and true. And, opposite their fidelity, a bargain was consummated between their friends and enemies by which, when the President the Negroes had made should be inaugurated, the three doubtful States should pass to the control of red-shirt and white-line leagues. The conspiracy triumphed, and the Negroes who saved the Republican party in 1876 were disfranchised, and are exiles in this free Republic until this day.

RUTHERFORD B. HAYES

is not alone to blame for this crime against truth, virtue, and fidelity. The Northern press, and a one-eyed, narrow, prejudiced public sentiment made the crime possible. The liberal movement of 1872 broke the confidence

of the North in the Southern Negro, and the great financial panic of 1873 stifled the voice of compassion, and palsied the helping hand that was extended to aid the persecuted blacks. A deaf ear was turned to all stories of Southern outrage, and materialism congealed the feelings of humanity, and the poor Negro went down to inhospitable and bloody political graves before the white-line banners, upon which was inscribed the motto, "*We must carry these States: peaceably, if we can; forcibly, if we must.*"

JAMES A. GARFIELD

*To be read*

owed his election to the Presidency to the clannishness of the Negro vote of the North. The Negro ~~vote~~ in the following Northern States in 1880 was as follows: —

Connecticut . . . . .	11,547
Illinois . . . . .	46,368
Indiana . . . . .	39,228
Kansas . . . . .	43,107
Massachusetts . . . . .	18,697
Michigan . . . . .	15,100
New Jersey . . . . .	65,104
New York . . . . .	531,277
Ohio . . . . .	79,900
Pennsylvania . . . . .	85,535
<hr/> Total . . . . .	<hr/> 935,843

We have only taken the Northern States where the Colored people are in largest numbers. So we have nearly one million of them in ten States. We have at least three hundred thousand Negro votes in these States. Had the Negro vote of Ohio been thrown for Gen. Hancock, Garfield would have lost his own State; and the Negro vote of Indiana and New York could have given Gen. Hancock an overwhelming majority in the Electoral College. The loyal Negro elected the last President.

#### A SOLID SOUTH

is a fact. It will stand in the face of Northern sentiment and refuse to be broken. The next Presidential candidate of the Republican party must carry a solid North, or suffer defeat. But it is said by some that the Negro question is settled; that the North is weary of it; that the Negro goes from the South to the national convention, insists upon the nomination of a candidate, towards whose selection by the Electoral College he can contribute no aid; that we must have other issues than the Negro question,—tariff, civil service, internal improvements, etc. If this be true, and if this is to be the policy of the Republican party, the Negro says, Amen! If civil-service reform is of more importance than human liberty, let the party abandon the Negro. Then what has the party to say of the Negro's abandonment of Republicanism? It is a poor rule that does not work both ways. The Republican party voluntarily assumed the task of eman-

cipating the Negro; it followed up this great and good work by making him a soldier, a citizen, a voter, and an office-holder. Is the work of the party ended? Is its mission completed? Oh, no, fellow-citizens! not until the humblest, blackest citizen in all the land shall be amply protected in the constitutional exercise of the political rights conferred upon him by the Constitution of these United States! To stop short of this would be cowardice; to close its otherwise glorious career without making free citizenship as broad as the continent, would be to go down to history as an inglorious failure. The Republican party cannot afford to surrender its magnificent history and splendid possibilities to the shot-gun policy of the South. It cannot afford to say to civilized Europe, "We made the Negro a freeman and a citizen; he helped us win glorious victories in war and in politics, but now we cannot defend our defenders!"

#### THE NATION POWERLESS

to protect its citizens? It is a libel upon our free government to offer such a miserable apology for its stolid indifference to murder and arson. Under the internal revenue laws the government requires a tax on every gallon of distilled spirits. If any manufacturer refuses to pay the tax, or attempts to evade the law, he is taken in hand. If he resists, he is shot. Nobody complains, and the government goes on. A loyal human life ought to be equal in value to a gallon of whiskey! The men who formed the Con-

stitution reserved the right to the people to change it whenever their interests required it. The creator is greater than the creature ; the people are more important than the Constitution ! If there is no power in the Constitution by which the people at the South can be protected, then let the Republican party recast the Constitution ; and let it be made a shield of burnished steel, large enough, strong enough, to protect every citizen, East and West, North and South, black and white, Democrat and Republican, from the golden shores of the Pacific to the pearly coast of the Atlantic. This can be done ; this must be done.

#### PUBLIC SENTIMENT

annoys many of our statesmen. They would be perfectly willing to do more for the Negro if it were not for public sentiment. When the statesmen in Athens were asked why they desired to banish Aristides, they replied that they were weary hearing of Aristides the Just, and desired to get rid of him. A shell was handed to Aristides in the streets of Athens by a citizen who did not know him. He was asked to cast his vote to banish Aristides. He wrote his own name on the shell without asking a question, and passed on. Is the Republican party weary hearing about the Negro? and would it have him consent to be abandoned, and pass on as a political exile and orphan? The party must speak at Chicago, and the North must answer our question at the November

ballot-box. Do we ask too much? Verily not. All we ask is that party platforms, promises, and resolves may be translated into honest action and hearty fulfilment. We ask that our persons, property, families, and lives may be defended from assassins and bulldozers; that our labor may have its just compensation; that justice may not tip the scales in favor of our enemies; that public inns, common-carrier companies, work-shops, and schools may be open to us, as they are to the white race; and that we may be permitted to cast an honest ballot, have it fairly counted, and receive a truthful declaration of the count. Could we ask less? Would the country have us ask less? By our adherence to the Republican party we have drawn the fire and intensified the malice of our enemies. And now if we cannot be protected by the party we have served, self-preservation, the first law of nature, demands us to save ourselves at all hazards. For this salvation we must organize, remembering that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.

#### REVENGE

has been suggested by some madcaps. God forbid! We are but a handful in this country, and we must not destroy our reputation for gentleness. The Negro has taught the world the gospel of forgiveness. Seven million Negroes may not hope to strike at forty-three million whites. Copiah and Danville first sicken the heart; then horrify, then madden us. They will be thoroughly investigated. Republican orators will ring the changes

on them until after election, and the government will do—nothing, simply *nothing*.

“ Not mine sedition’s trumpet blast  
 And threatening word ;  
 I read the lesson of the past,  
 That firm endurance wins at last  
 More than the sword.

“ O clear-eyed Faith and Patience, thou  
 So calm and strong,  
 Lend strength to weakness ; teach us how  
 The sleepless eyes of God look through  
 This night of wrong.”

#### EMIGRATION

has virtue in the judgment of some of our discouraged and gloomy brethren. This is an error of judgment. America is the theatre of the Negro’s noblest acts. The graves of his ancestry are here. He was married and was given in marriage here. His children were born here; and, while undergoing the crucial test of manhood and citizenship, he can not afford to withdraw.

This is our own, our native land,

and under American institutions we are to demonstrate our claims to manhood, and our fitness for the duties of citizenship.

#### THE MORAL PHASE

of the Negro question is worthy of profound study. We have not the time to examine the ethics of the anti-

slavery movement, but venture the statement that the American people owe much of their moral breadth to the Negro question. The Negro problem was the other side of American materialism. The leading men of the last century obtained their greatness in the struggle the Colonies passed through. The constant dwelling upon the questions of personal rights made them moral giants; and all the marked men of the present century owe their greatness to the Negro problem. It was natural that a young nation in a new country would be given over to materialism. The obstructions across the path of its physical advancement were numerous and stubborn. The bread-winner in such a country and nation would not be humane as a rule. Environment is a profound factor in the problem of civilization. Constant contact with the rougher phases of nature makes men correspondingly rough. The humanity and social life of young colonies in new countries are scarcely ever of a high order. But some injured right of humanity crying aloud for redress keeps the moral senses of society from slumbering, and holds the affections in healthful tension. Fortunate, indeed, for the permanent fame of the American nation, that the Negro problem has been ever before them. The poor Negro saved America from the grossest materialism, and furnished the condition for the production of her ablest men. The great French preacher, Fénelon began his eulogy over the body of the dead king of France by exclaiming, "*God only is great!*" And there is, certainly, no earthly greatness but goodness. The

greatness of the foremost Americans of the nineteenth century was distilled through the tears and bloody sweat of the Negro slave; and every ray of lasting glory that rests upon the brow of the Republic was born in the deepest vale of the slave's degradation. The republic of letters owes the Negro a debt of gratitude. Poetry and prose, history and biography, have gleaned in this field; and fiction, approaching with tardy step, will yet be blessed with a rich store of fact and fancy unequalled in the world's history.

If there had been no Negro slavery there would have been no anti-slavery agitation ; and having no anti-slavery agitation, we could have had no Lundy, no Garrison, no Phillips, no Sumner, no Stevens, no Lincoln. And there being no contest between slavery and freedom, there would have been no rebellion ; and, hence, Grant and Thomas, Sheridan and McPherson, would have been as obscure as South Sea Islanders. The fame of Lincoln rests upon the Emancipation edict ; the fame of Sumner rests upon his two great speeches, *The Barbarism of Slavery, The Crime against Kansas, and his Civil Rights Bill.* The only Americans immortal in history are those who emptied themselves for humanity. Other men have striven to make a place in history, but as in the zoölogical classification of animals, so they will find their proper group. By their works ye shall know them.

## THE BLAIR EDUCATIONAL BILL

is the grandest measure of our times. It is broad, comprehensive, and beneficent. It is a prophecy of better things to come; and a pledge that this country is not to be Europeanized or turned over to native ignorance, and the nihilism of Russia, the communism of France, the socialism of Germany. What we want is more light in America. The electric light in the streets of Washington is more than your police force. Light in this country is more than our army, stretching from Lake Itasca to where the Mississippi mingles his golden thread in the deep blue of the Gulf of Mexico; more than our navy, overshadowing the ocean.

## “THE NEW SOUTH,”

as Gen. James B. Gordon puts it, must aid this work. A happy solution of the Negro problem can be speedily reached if the white people of the South will take an interest in this question. Three things must be done by the white people there, viz., the chain-gang system should be abolished; the iniquitous, cheating plantation credit system should be abandoned; and every child, white and black, should be sent to school for at least seven months in every year.

The Negro is thirsting for knowledge, and should be gratified. Some years before the war, an artist of Philadelphia was secured by the State of South Carolina to paint some national emblematic picture for her State

House. Jefferson Davis was invited to act with the South Carolina committee at Washington, in criticising the studies of this work. The most creditable sketch presented was a design representing the North by various mechanical implements; the West by a prairie and plough; while the South was represented by various things, the centre-piece, however, being a cotton-bale with a Negro upon it fast asleep. When Mr. Davis saw it, he said, "Gentlemen, this will never do; what will become of the South when the Negro wakes up?"

#### THE SOUTHERN REBELLION

startled the Negro; the reconstruction struggle brought him to his feet; he has yawned, and, to-day, with open eyes, he is manfully looking the serious questions of life squarely in the face. He is learning the practical lessons of life with ease and thoroughness; and all he requires is kind treatment and fair dealing from the whites, and no people in the country will more heartily rejoice that he was aroused from his slumbers than the Southern people themselves.

#### THE VALLEY OF THE CONGO,

in Africa, is attracting intelligent attention. Every Negro in the United States should have an honest pride in the African question. Africa is yet going to pay this nation dollar for dollar of the three billions spent in prosecuting the war; and America is going to compensate Africa for stealing her children by placing

the means of civilization in her waiting and willing hands. Thanks to his Excellency President Arthur for his message on the Congo, and loud huzzas for the United States Senate for recognizing the International African Association. Africa is sure to be the scene of the world's greatest civilization. She will be quickened in every nerve and fibre by the power of commerce; and Christian civilization will give tone to her sluggish moral pulse. Africa will be regenerated; tribes will be converted; states will be founded; arts and letters will flourish; peace will reign in her mountains and smile in her valleys; ships and cables, journals and literature, science and discovery, will bind her to the civilized world in bonds of eternal friendship.

#### NEW LEADERS

for the Negro race are needed. Not the time-serving lickspittle, not the self-seeking parasite, not the obsequious, cringing go-between, not swaggering insolence or skulking cowardice in leadership, nor any man who is either ashamed of being, or mean enough to deny that he is, a Negro. We want, we demand leaders, first of all, who are not ashamed of the race; who are possessed of brains, character, courage, zeal, and tact. We want leaders who know the history of the race's trials, struggles, and achievements; and who can, from that history, draw inspiration for the great work to be accomplished. We demand leaders who are the friends of mechanical education for the rising young men; and who are pledged

to a system of thorough education for our young women. We demand leaders who will neither touch, taste, nor handle, nor put to their neighbors' lips, in private or public, at home or abroad, on land or sea, the accursed cup of drink. Men they must be of noble instincts and generous impulses; who have a genius for hard, self-sacrificing labor to build up the race. Such leaders will have the skill to detect the condition of our people, and the genius and heroism to lead the way to the heart of the race's moral need. God grant that such men may be forthcoming.

#### MORAL EMANCIPATION

is what we most need now. Many salutary lessons are taught us by the bitter past. Let us lay them to heart, and, taking fresh courage, turn to the great work that awaits us on every hand. All that remains of this tempestuous state of things is but the rocking of a troubled sea to rest. For He whose chariot the winds are, and the clouds, the dust that waits upon His sultry march shall visit us in mercy; shall descend propitious in His chariot, paved with love.





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